

Final Essay

Assignment Task: The Final Essay completes an activity started at the beginning of the quarter. On the first day of class, each student wrote a short description of their personal, or idiosyncratic, culture. Now you will write a new description of your culture based on what you have learned over the quarter and compare it to your original description. As you review your original description of your personal culture from the beginning of the quarter, you may decide that your initial writing was inadequate or that during the first week of class you did not really understand what culture meant. In this essay you will describe how your understanding of culture has grown and then offer a revised description of your personal culture. This essay will move beyond description to analysis. That is, in this final essay, you will aim to answer questions like these (though not necessarily in this order):

- * What are the various functions of my traits?
- * What do my idiosyncratic cultural traits indicate about things such as gender and social roles?
- * How do my traits mesh with local and national cultural norms?
- * How do my traits influence my perception of other cultures?

These are not the only questions you might address, but they might help you to start thinking more analytically about your personal culture.

Drafting Approach.

1. Reread your initial description of your personal culture and free write about how your thinking about culture in general and your own personal culture in particular has changed. Make sure that you note in this free write aspects of your initial writing that you want to call attention to. This free write might become your introduction.
2. Reflect on your idiosyncratic culture in relation to the topics we covered in class, e.g., religion, identity, kinship, etc.
 - Perhaps do a brainstorm for the topics, jotting down ideas for connecting class reading with your own culture.
 - Identify (in writing) the change in awareness, traits(s), and institution(s) that you want to develop in this final essay.
3. Since you have limited space, choose one or two points to discuss. Once you have decided which change in awareness, traits(s), and institution(s) to focus on (perhaps highlight items in the list you made for the previous step), draft a series of analyses in which you describe the trait you are considering and then discuss the way that your knowledge of that trait helps you think differently about an institution and your own personal culture. Use anthropological terms whenever possible.
4. Review the analysis you drafted and develop a short discussion of how your personal culture impacts your interpretation of and/or reaction to other cultures.
5. Clean up your draft. Rewrite sections that may be confusing to the reader. You may want to ask a family member or friend to read your essay to help you identify potentially confusing areas.
6. Conclude your essay by reflecting on the implications of the awareness of culture that you have developed.
7. Your essay should be a minimum of 1200 words and no more than 1500. Single space your essay, spell and grammar check it, and upload it to ANGEL.

YOU MUST TYPE UP YOUR ORIGINAL DESCRIPTION –THIS SHOULD BE THE FIRST THING I READ IN YOUR ESSAY; IT DOES NOT COUNT TOWARD THE 1200 WORD MINIMUM.

Course Outcomes

The following highlighted course outcomes are met by this assignment:

A. Illustrate their communication skills by:

- i. Using fundamental cultural anthropology terms and concepts in proper context (2.c, 2.d, 4.b)
- ii. Developing or improving both verbal and written communication skills (2.c, 2.d, 4)
- iii. Clearly expressing thoughts about human culture and adaptive processes (2.c, 2.d, 4.b)
- iv. Successfully completing team work both in- and out-of-class (2.c, 2.d, 3)

B. Demonstrate their critical thinking and problem solving skills by:

- i. Recognizing key elements of human culture (2.a, 2.c)
- ii. Analyzing culture at various levels (individual, community, national) and from an anthropological perspective (1.a, 1.b)
- iii. Explaining anthropological theory and its application to human culture (1.a, 1.b)
- iv. Assessing the interaction between culture, biology and the environment (1.a, 1.b)
- v. Identifying cultural traits and determining their function within their cultural context (1.a, 1.b)

C. Illustrate their level of cultural literacy by:

- i. Demonstrating the ability to be culturally relative (1.a, 1.c, 2.a, 2.b)
- ii. Interrelating personal experience and societal forces within the context of cultural anthropology (1.a, 1.b)
- iii. Demonstrating an understanding of why human cultures vary (1.a, 1.b)
- iv. Demonstrating respect for the diversity of human culture (1)

D. Show their level of information literacy by:

- i. Using and evaluating a variety of internet resources (2, 4.c)
- ii. Assessing anthropological information in general and scholarly resources (1.a, 2.a, 4.b, 4.c)
- iii. Using appropriate citation standards for anthropology (4.b, 4.c)
- iv. Exploring how anthropological knowledge is gained by practicing a few of cultural anthropology's methodologies, e.g., real-world observation (2.a, 2.c, 2.d)